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March 3, 1968

Mr. Bennett Cerf
Random House
457 Madison Ave.
New York, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Cerf,

Our country and its institutions have been kind to you as to few men. You have been blessed with the opportunity of following several rewarding and successful careers. Thus you have become rich and famous.

If each of us has promises to keep in the miles he goes before he sleeps, you have been allotted more miles, and they are easy ones.

Because you are a publisher - and a wealthy one - your obligations are on both counts greater. Yet, when our country and its institutions are in serious jeopardy, you abdicated, with the rest of the eastern intellectual community.

A president has been gunned down in broad daylight on the streets of an American city and consigned to history with the dubious epitaph of what reasonable men can at best consider a dubious inquest, by the government that came into dominion by that murder alone. At least three times you were, to my knowledge, offered the opportunity of assuming the burden of a responsibly publisher. At least three times you failed your charge.

Leo Sauvage, a respected and competent writer, author of one of the first two books on the subject, was under contract to you. His was then a successful book abroad. Because you would not publish criticism of the government on this issue, you retreated from your contractual obligation.

In October 1965, on invitation, I submitted my first book on this subject, WHITEWASH: THE REPORT ON THE WARREN REPORT. Until recently it was the only book to restrict itself virtually 100% to the evidence of the Commission that invalidated its Report. I was not told that you did not like the book, that it was a bad one (as its subsequent history would have disproved), but that you publish only established authors. Need I comment on what universal application of this unique concept would do to the publishing industry -and to you.

When the field promised profit, you contracted for a book of novel format by a woman of undoubted competence, Maggie Fields, of California. In the most unmanly fashion, you sneaked away from that one.

Consistent with this history is your subsequent record. By the end of 1967, there remained in the minds of rational people little doubt that the conclusions of the government in its whitewashing non-investigation of this most awful crime were entirely untenable. Josiah Thompson produced a skilled blend of literary thievery and willful error touted into a work of criticism when it is, in reality, a formula for getting the government off the hook, for showing it the concessions it must make while insisting on its basic conclusions, for perpetuation of the monster lie that is a national dishonor. Simultaneously he disassociates himself

from those he terms "critics" and defends the indefensible, the notorious investigators, by word and by omission. His is a work of designed dishonesty or consummate ignorance. You seem proud to be its distributor. Here you find your proper place on this most vital issue of our lives.

But not here alone, for now you vend the verbal vomit of an export from Britain that intends our country as well as the Hessians. You purvey as a book the pamphlet that is a paragraph-by-paragraph reprint of a magazine article entitled "After The Assassination". Aside from the cost, the major difference is in the modesty of the subtitle of your presentation, "A Positive Appraisal of the Warren Report". Generously leaded as it is, this diluted, warmed-over milktoast of a "book" is hard pressed to devote two pages to a chapter.

And it is anything but an "appraisal of the Warren Report". It is, save for the shabby subtitle (did I hear the word "scavenger"?), a work of conspicuous sycophancy, an unending slander of those who seek the recapture of the national honor; and it is by an apology for a man who has not the kidney to face me, on his work or mine, in any forum of his choosing.

Indeed, despite his brave but entirely false front, from the internal evidence of the scrivening of the eminence, he is without the means of making an appraisal of the Warren Report for he either is not possessed of its alleged backstopping, the 26 volumes of what for lack of a proper word in the language is termed "evidence", or worse, it is beyond his comprehension, outside his understanding, exceeding ~~even~~ his capacity in limited arithmetic.

If you can face it, I invite you to open Mr. Sparrow's "book" so well suited to his name to page 2. Here you will find this sentence:

"The evidence taken by the Commission was published in twenty-six volumes, half of them consisting of photographs and other exhibits." With the first 15 of the 26 devoted entirely to "testimony" relieved by no single picture, this is untrue in number ~~of~~ in bulk.

It is, in fact, generous to consider that the eminent warden of All Saints has undertaken to "appraise" the Warren Report without having the evidence without ~~w~~ which he cannot appraise it. The alternative is less complimentary. This gruesome lack of knowledge of these 26 volumes is further illustrated by Mr. Sparrow's direct quotation of an entirely non-existent witness. As a measure of the integrity with which you have been I tell you that I informed him in writing that there was no female clerk from the Irving Sport Shop who testified (page 46), in advance of publication of the "book". As undaunted by sex or as unable to discriminate as he is by fact and reality, your exalted author, learned lickspittle that he is, writes:

"In fact, the clerk was a woman, and all she said about seeing Oswald was that she could not remember his ever being in the shop."

That the last part of the sentence is a non-sequitur is one of the minor blights of the time. It is precisely the point that this was not and could not have been the Real Lee Harvey Oswald who was at the gun shop but a deliberate counterfeit whom I dubbed the False Oswald.

However, because it is apparent that Mr. Sparrow is here to barnstorm, having, incongruously, made his first appearance on NBC, now owner of Random House (when his work was entirely unknown and unadvertised, a new merchandising concept, if what is merchandised is the printed work, which I do not for one moment believe) I encourage you not to dispatch him to Dallas, where men prize their manhood and Dial Dwayne Ryder, whose testimony (volume 11, pp. 224ff) is quoted, lives.

So Mr. Sparrow cannot "appraise" the Warren Report because he either does not have or does not understand the "evidence" from which it allegedly derives, I leave the choice to you.

What, then, can he and does he "appraise"? Those who hear him and those less fortunate, who read him, will conclude that it is the "critics", whom he slanders as "demonologists". But how much better can he do that, assuming this were, really, his intent!

On page 13 he says of my books, "Mr. Weisberg has published three". Now it happens that I have detected a single difference between the now-second-hand magazine article and your retreading. What now is designated "Selected Reading List" (page 76), was on December 14 designated, "The following are among the books and periodicals consulted by Mr. Sparrow". Although it is entirely unrelated here, in either form, his bibliography includes "MacBird". Here, also, is my first book only, improperly listed as having been published by Dell, which reprinted it. Now it happens that before this explanation of what happened to the British Empire was written (to consider Sparrow is to know what happened to Britannia), I had written and probably already published four books. Certainly if Mr. Sparrow's sources are more original than Mr. Thompson's (and they could hardly be less so), if he knew enough to responsibly write that I "went to New Orleans to assist in the investigation", he knew that on being interviewed there, following my testimony before the grand jury, I announced that my fourth book had been completed prior to this appearance.

But what kind of "appraisal" can be made by a "scholar" of the writing of a man to whom he credits 75% of his publicly-known output when he pretends in his own bibliography knowledge of but 25%? "Appraisal", clearly, was neither Mr. Sparrow's intent nor result. He is a propagandist, motivated by malice and undeterred by ignorance. To regard the "scholarship" of the warden of All Saints is to lament for Oxford!

In common with those of his ilk who find fame and profit in blind apology for what cannot be justified, Mr. Sparrow dare not confront even that fraction of my work with which he suggests acquaintance. His is the standard device of the forked-tongue literati who fashion instant evidence with a flip of the fangs. His chapter that pretends the confrontation with my writing is deceptively headed "Lane and Weisberg". Beginning with an unalloyed lie and unabashed by his new concept of proof (the Warren Report is proved to be right because it says it is), with no more fetter on his falsehood than he imposes (which is none), he finds it possible to address me in but part of a single paragraph. Here, as elsewhere, he does not on a single occasion mention the considerable volume of evidence I do present, all cited by the official source. Instead, he tells a lie about the single one of my books that he mentions, saying I "content" myself "with a ceaseless small-fire of rhetorical questions". Inspired by this embellishment of Ananias, he blends still another lie with still another concept:

"Mr. Lane and Mr. Weisberg have therefore adopted a method of controversy that does not expose them to direct refutation: they offer no connected account of what they think occured".

Any sensible child who has read WHITEWASH here cannot but conclude that Mr. Sparrow has neither the 26 volumes nor the understanding, for my account is quite explicit. It says that Oswald was framed, that the Commission proved he shot no one, that it had irrefutable proof of the existence of a conspiracy (specified), and that each of its conclusions is invalidated by its own best evidence.

Now it happens that the explicit conclusion of my book is that the expected job has not been done and still must be, entirely in public and preferably by Congress. I did not set out to either exculpate Oswald (which the Commission did for me while

brazenly misrepresenting its redundant proofs) or to solve the crime (which I regard as a responsibility society and government cannot delegate). But had I intended to establish the innocence of the murdered accused, is it necessary for me to prove who did commit the crimes to prove he didn't. Were this philosophy to prevail in law or logic, would any accused ever be set free.

I cannot speak for Britain (any more, I hope, than Mr. Sparrow), but I can insist that this does not obtain in the United States. To advance it as serious criticism, as Mr. Sparrow, with your benevolence, does, is to underline his philosophy that one would have thought perished with Hitler and to emphasize that the position of our government and its apologists put us between Germany 1934 and Orwell 1984.

In any event, Mr. Sparrow's designation of this chapter as "Lane and Weisberg" is up to his highest standard of intellectual and literary honesty. It has nothing of Weisberg but fleeting misrepresentation and lies that are not accidental and are no less monstrous for their brevity.

With the bravery of a gang of yokers attacking an arthritic octogenarian, this learned eminence eschews confrontation with those he assails with impunity and slanders with your connivance. He will not confront me in debate before an audience of his peers, nor would he in writing in the initial vehicle for his debasement of the intellect that you commercialize for him. He is the literary night-sneak, the more contemptible for his cowardice. However, if you think otherwise, may I invite you to arrange a confrontation, verbally or in writing. I need no notice, I need only his writing, for that is more than enough. It is a fitting monument to this empty shell of a man who has only the beard and the trousers as a claim to manhood. Think you that one who invents witnesses to quote directly, who doesn't have the "evidence" he "appraises", doesn't understand it, or both, dare face those of us who, hitherto unknown, have assumed the abandoned burden of the intellectuals of renown?

I could produce a manuscript analyzing his twice its length, honestly and thoroughly documented, in a week of work. This, as he well knows, is another reason he will stab in the back but not look into the eye. I spare you that, for you will, I trust, come to be sufficiently ashamed with that writing on the assassination and its fake investigation that was never intended to be an investigation you have chosen as your personal contribution to the prevalence of freedom and the viability of our society. I conclude with the quotation of what I believe you will find the grossest libel that you are now distributing.

As he cannot pretend to examine my writing save by dishonest lumping with Lane's, so the depravity of his deliberate defamation drives him to bracket me with Joesten and his strange beliefs with mine. If you can bear but a single additional look at your product, pray open it to page 21. Here you will read:

"At the same time, says Mr. Joesten, there was on foot a conspiracy to kill the President, the parties to which included one of the President's aides, Ken O'Donnell....in essentials the plot is the same as that postulated by Messrs. Lane and Weisberg...."

While I freely grant that Mr. Joesten has succeeded in what I would have thought beyond the capacity of man in defaming the Dallas police, his concepts are in no sense mine. There is nothing in either my writing or my speaking that even one as lacking in honesty or decency as your British import can with his own peculiar sickness of mind or perhaps of intellect torture into anything even remotely approximating this. It is a deliberate, malicious libel in which you, as distributor, share responsibility.

This, then, is the kind of book on the murder of an American president Random House and Bennett Cerf will publish, distribute, promote or associate themselves with. Not those that seek the recovery of the national honor and integrity forfeited in those endless great scandals and tragedies that followed the worse one of the murder itself. Not those seeking redemption in honest confession of error.

We presume the fallibility of man and government. Our entire mechanism of justice is predicated on the certainty that the most exalted among us, the judges, inevitably will err. Those who substitute hate for thought fail to realize that it is in the rectification of error that governments earn trust and grow strong. If courts can and do err inside the scheme of organized and policed justice, is there any presumption that an ex parte proceeding of unchecked and uncontrolled humans writing the rules as they go can be immune to error, assuming this was their intent?

I lecture you on this fundamental of the democratic belief because it is foreign to the understanding and writing of the man ~~on whose behalf~~ you have just, with conspicuous success, begun to present to your countrymen as its exponent and champion. Are we to assume that his appearance on the Today Show, the nation's top morning TV booking that is so constantly denied those who write with accuracy on this subject - the shop of the owner of Random House - is mere coincidence and both the end and the beginning? I hope I am wrong, but I do not. How remarkable it is that this unannounced work is so heavily promoted before it is on sale, a new sales device, selling a book that cannot be bought. It and the deception of the London Times Literary Supplement, where it first desecrated Guttenburg, where it was billed as a special article rather than a "book", and where it served as the vehicle for part of the preparation for the coming political assassination of Robert Kennedy, are more suggestive that the purpose of the book is to justify the media attention to the befrocked fink whose real purpose is to befoul the mind, not to sell this anemic that is less than a respectable pamphlet. How further remarkable is its timing, to coincide with the scheduled beginning of the trial in New Orleans, for which it serves as still another, either, in the endless campaign to capture the minds of the judges in advance and to corrupt all those who might sit on the jury.

And how reminiscent all of it is of the rotten scandal of the CIA prostitution of the other end of scholarship, the students. Only when you understand the distress of the government's intelligence arms over this subject can you begin to realize how entirely consistent with their need is your present effort on their behalf, whether or not it is of this inspiration, whether or not it is so subsidized, or has this intent.

Those whose preoccupation centers on acceptability or profit may find it difficult to understand, but this worries me greatly and I am seized by apprehension for our future, our immediate future, as I am troubled by our present. I hope it is less difficult to conceive that simply by being born here I inherited benefits that put me in lifelong debt I acknowledge and assume and seek to meet with the longest days and shortest nights on which man can survive-shorter nights and longer days than four years ago I could imagine possible. Your venture denied me the little sleep I would have had had it come to me the moment of my late retiring. After two disturbed hours in which my mind kept my eyes open and wearied itself pondering the ultimate meaning of this thing upon which you are now engaged, I had to arise and write you. I believe I owe it to you as much as to myself and that we both owe the time of writing and reading to something more important than either of us.

And now the thin, hard light of the winter's day is here. I hope it brings a little light to you, too.

Sincerely,